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ABSTRACT

The persistent net loss of young people from rural areas has potentially contradictory implications for educational policy. Believing that youth migration to urban areas is inevitable, one school board might feel obligated to prepare students for urban jobs. Another board might view such actions as community suicide and attempt to slow outmigration by orienting curricula to rural living and the local job market. Data from High School and Beyond files indicate that 41 percent of rural high school seniors in the base survey had migrated 6 years later, compared to 32 percent of suburban seniors and 24 percent of urban seniors. Analyses examined the effects on outmigration (overall, college attendance, and military enlistment) of school aggregate socioeconomic status, school aggregate academic ability, rural location, school size, isolated location, and the extent of academic and vocational curricular offerings. School size was the most important predictor of both advanced academic and vocational course offerings. However, neither school size nor curricular offerings had any important impact on youth outmigration. In contrast, relatively immutable structural aspects of schools and communities coupled with individual student characteristics seemed the primary determinants of migration. There seems to be little merit in the notion that rural decision makers can affect youth migration by manipulating school curriculum. (SV)

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Youth Migration From Rural Areas

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There has been long-standing interest in the migration of young people from rural areas. This interest exists partly because the migration has been so large and persistent and partly because it has important implications for public policy. To the degree that rural areas are net losers of young adults, questions arise about their future viability. These questions in turn prompt questions about the public's interest in and responsibility for fostering the health of rural communities.

The net loss of the young adult population within rural areas has potentially contradictory implications for education policy. On the one hand, if rural communities are losing their young people, and if as a consequence they are becoming less "viable," it could follow that heroic efforts to preserve, not to mention strengthen, local schools within such regions are ill-advised. What is the point of maintaining or enhancing the school in a dying community if the community's condition is unalterably terminal? Alternative policies, typically involving

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the reorganization and consolidation of rural schools, become attractive in this context.

On the other hand, it is possible that the maintenance of a healthy local school is one means by which rural areas can retain or even regain their viability (Hobbs, 1987). And it could follow that state or federal governments are well advised to preserve and strengthen local rural schools as part of a more global commitment to the social and economic welfare of rural America.

These contradictory policy positions can be reflected at the local level in a rural school's curriculum. For example, a school board, believing that a net loss of its youth to urban areas is inevitable, might reasonably feel an obligation to prepare students for urban jobs and for making the transition to metropolitan living. And, in fact, there are curricula designed specifically to prepare rural youth to successfully adapt to life in the city (e.g., Swift, 1988). Another board might view such actions as a form of community suicide and feel an obligation to attempt to slow the tide of migration by orienting programs to rural living and the local job market (even though that market may be in decline and graduates risk unemployment). Indeed, Mulkey (1988) argues that one reason for the inadequate curricula of rural schools is the reluctance of rural people to invest in students who will simply carry away their (expensive) skills to the benefit of urban places.

These ambiguities surrounding education policy implications associated with a net out-migration of rural youth make it important to better understand the role schools and schooling play in the decisions young people make about where to settle. A second reason for inquiry along these lines arises out of the migration literature itself, where relatively little attention has been paid to the attributes of schools and their effects on resettlement. Much of the existing research relies heavily on status attainment models that have been criticized for their exclusive focus on individual attributes such as SES and intelligence.

We shall be concerned in this chapter with linkages between schooling and the migratory behavior of young people, and we shall place special emphasis on the migratory behavior

of young people in rural areas. The chapter begins with a brief overview of previous migration research in addition to a rationale for the school and community attributes we selected for study. Next comes a review of our methodology, which is followed by a presentation of findings. The chapter ends with a discussion of conclusions and implications for policy.

Background

It is clear that young people in rural areas are more likely to leave their communities than otherwise similar people in suburban or urban communities (Brown, 1987; O'Hare, 1988; Swanson & Butler, 1987). Moreover, these studies demonstrate that, when people leave their rural homes, they are more likely to settle within either suburban or urban communities than they are to situate in other rural communities (Lyson, 1986).

It is also clear that this migration is selective in its nature. As Lyson (1986) notes, previous studies show that rural-to-urban migrants have a greater tendency to score higher on intelligence tests (Price & Sikes, 1974) and come from upper-status, nonfarm backgrounds (Price & Sikes, 1974; Willits, Crider, & Bealer, 1980) than their nonmigrant peers. These findings have potentially alarming implications for the future strength of rural communities. Moreover, the disproportionate loss of intelligent and high-status young people suggests that economic and social inequalities across communities are likely to increase over time.

Perhaps the most common interpretation of this selective migration has been in terms of the relative lack of economic opportunity in rural regions. The evidence is not entirely supportive of this interpretation, however. For example, Seyfrit's (1986) study suggests that rapid rural economic development has no effect on the out-migration of young people (see also Rhoda, 1983).

In all of this research, scant attention has been paid to the possibility that certain aspects of local schools might affect migration. And yet there are good reasons for supposing that

schooling has important influences on the migratory decisions of youth. After all, schools can offer young people insights into opportunities that exist in regions far removed from their immediate locales. Students can also develop aspirations and skills that significantly broaden the range of available economic opportunities. Conversely, by narrowly focusing on a restricted range of outcomes, such as "the basics," and with an intellectual horizon that stretches not much beyond the local region, students' recognition of opportunities and the development of their aspirations could be severely blunted.

This thinking suggests that curricular offerings are likely to be among the strongest means by which schools influence the migration decisions of youth. For this reason, we chose to focus our analysis on relationships between schools' curricular offerings and the subsequent migration of students.

It would be inadequate to look simply at relationships between measures of curricular offerings and migratory behavior, however, for several reasons. First, previous research has shown that curricular offerings themselves are the result of complex decisions made within educational systems (Barker, 1985; Haller, Monk, Spotted Bear, Griffith, & Moss, 1990; McKenzie, 1989; Monk, 1987; Monk & Haller, 1991). Given an interest in considering the policy implications of our findings, we need to understand the determinants of curricular offerings themselves if we are to fully grasp their impact on migration.

Second, it is possible that these predictors of course offerings have their own direct effects on migration. If we hope to explain migration, we need to be open to influences that arise independently of a curriculum effect. We know, for example, that measures of ability and SES at the individual level have substantial effects on migration. It seems likely that such factors may play a role when the school is the unit of analysis.

Third, existing measures of curricular offerings are seriously limited. For example, simple counts of course titles offered by high schools are readily available. While such data are useful for the task here, it is also clear that more information about qualitative differences in the courses offered as

well as information about actual course content would be highly relevant. Unfortunately, such data are not readily available, and our strategy has been to identify school structural characteristics that we believe are related to these more qualitative aspects of curricular offerings. As a consequence, some of the explanatory power we find for the structural characteristics may stem from the unmeasured qualitative differences in curricular offerings.

With all this in mind, we identified the following five school-level attributes for further investigation: (a) average socioeconomic status, (b) average student academic ability, (c) location in a rural area, (d) number of students served, and (e) location in an isolated area. Each of these can affect both curricular offerings and migration patterns.

Socioeconomic status and test score attributes capture differences in demand for different kinds of courses from both parents and students. Ruralness can make a difference, aside from its impact on curricular offerings, to the degree that rural youth face different economic opportunities relative to others. The two most traditional lines of work in rural communities (production agriculture and extractive industries) have been in decline for years, and rural youth have had to factor this reality into their decisions about where and how to live. Moreover, rural youth have been found to have lower educational and occupational aspirations than others (Monk & Haller, 1986), and these lower aspirations could affect the contents of offered courses.

School size is relevant because we know it has important implications for curricular offerings (Barker, 1985; Haller et al., 1990; Monk, 1987; Monk & Haller, 1991), and curricular offerings can provide insight into lives outside of local communities. Size can also have bearing on the content of courses in addition to the range of different courses offered. To the degree that economies of scale exist and are exploited, a higher-quality set of courses will be possible for a given per pupil expenditure level in larger compared with smaller schools. Size offers the further advantage of being a relatively mutable school characteristic. It has long been at the center of the policy debate pertaining to rural schools.

Finally, isolation can affect the ability of schools to offer courses, particularly for specialized and otherwise advanced courses where access to competent teaching resources may be seriously restricted. Isolation can also affect student aspirations, and this in turn can affect the contents of those courses that are offered.

We can take this analysis one step further by recognizing that the impact of curricular offerings on migratory behavior may vary depending on the degree to which the community being served is rural. In particular, there is some reason to believe that curricular offerings in rural schools will have a more important effect on the migration behavior of students than will be the case elsewhere.

The rationale for this belief arises out of critics' claims that recent curriculum reforms have had negative effects on those who seek to remain in rural areas (Hobbs, 1987; Sher, 1986). The critics' argument is that today's curriculum is driven by the more specialized urban-oriented economic needs of society. As a consequence, curriculum reform has the effect of equipping rural youth more for life in the city than for life in rural areas. Upon graduation, rural youth have little choice but to move to more urban environments.

According to these arguments, the more successful the school becomes at reforming its curriculum, the more likely students will be to leave and the more questionable such communities' future becomes. Educational "improvement" in this light is the means by which rural communities destroy themselves. If curriculum improvements are viewed from this perspective, it is not surprising to observe rural communities opposing state-led efforts to "improve schools" either through consolidation or through the strengthening (read "citification") of the curriculum.

These critics argue for more regionally oriented curricula that provide youngsters the option of remaining within rural communities. It is noteworthy that this regional orientation tends to involve a deemphasis of traditional academic fare and a greater emphasis on developing fundamental entrepreneurial skills. If schools were "strengthened" in this fashion, the expectation is

that better schooling would contribute to the future social as well as economic viability of rural communities.

In light of these arguments, we decided to look separately at the effects of curricular offerings on migration behaviors in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Our expectation is that indications of efforts to "improve" the curriculum will have more powerful effects in rural areas than elsewhere. More specifically, we hypothesize that manifestations of curriculum "improvement" in rural schools will be more closely related to migration than elsewhere.

Data and Methods

Our data come from various files constituting the High School and Beyond data set (hereafter *HS&B*). Three files were of particular relevance to this study: a school file, a student file, and a course file.

Briefly, the HS&B study consisted of a nationally representative sample of 1,015 U.S. high schools, both public and private. Information regarding each of these schools was collected in 1980 and again in 1982 and concerned such matters as facilities, enrollment, and student and faculty characteristics. The school file comprises these institutional data.

Schools were selected using a complex stratified sampling scheme in which some strata were very substantially oversampled. Weights are provided in the data to compensate for this oversampling, and we have used these school weights in all of the analyses we report below. We did, however, rescale the weights so that our tests of significance do not yield inflated values.

From within each school, up to 36 sophomores and 36 seniors were randomly sampled in 1980 (there were approximately 30,000 students in each cohort). These students responded to questionnaires concerning their school experiences and their plans for the future. In 1982, 1984, and 1986 students were recontacted and responded to questionnaires regarding their post-high school activities. The student file

contains these data. For our purposes, we focused on the senior cohort's responses during the base year and in the three follow-ups.

Finally, as part of the 1982 resurvey, data were collected on each of the courses offered in every school. This data file provides a classification of every course into 52 curricular areas (e.g., agriculture, mathematics) and, within each of these, a further classification that is descriptive of the course's nature. This course file provided us with information about the curricular emphasis in each of the sampled schools.

We selected from the school file all public, four-year high schools that reported themselves as general, comprehensive schools. We eliminated all specialized schools that dealt with handicapped and vocational programs. We further restricted the sample to those schools that participated in both the 1980 and the 1982 follow-up surveys. Finally, we excluded schools with fewer than five seniors participating in the 1986 cohort follow-up.

For our measures of family SES and academic ability, we relied upon the composite SES measure provided in the data set and the battery of ability tests administered as part of the HS&B survey. These data were collected at the individual student level. Given our interest in school-level phenomena, we aggregated these responses and used school means for each variable (AVSES and AVTEST).

We assessed ruralness on the basis of the self-designation of the school's administrator. In the survey, administrators were asked to classify their school as being in an urban, suburban, or rural area. We created a dummy variable (RURAL) from their responses in which schools designated as rural were coded 1. Thus for our purposes rural schools are schools whose administrator considers them to be rural.[1]

School size (SIZE) was measured by the number of students enrolled. We used a square root transformation of the size variable to reduce the degree of skewness in its distribution.

Isolation (ISOLATE) was measured using the mean of the school's distance (in miles) from three other educational institutions: the nearest two-year college, business, or trade school,

and four-year college or university. A square root transformation was also applied to this variable to reduce its skew.

We selected two measures of curricular offerings that we constructed using the HS&B course file: the number of different advanced academic courses (ADVCRS) and the number of different vocational courses (VOCED) found within each high school. We selected these attributes as key indicators of how the curriculum is structured within a school.

We interpret the number of advanced academic course offerings as a measure of how congruent the school is with the national emphasis on strengthening the academic curriculum. It is our measure of local efforts to "improve" the curriculum and to bring it into line with the prevailing sense of national priorities.

Advanced courses were identified as courses described with one or more of the following terms: *accelerated, advanced placement, college placement,* and *honors.* The only exception involved calculus. All courses with the term *calculus* in the title were included in the count of advanced courses.

We chose a vocational course count to gauge emphasis within the school on more immediate and more regionally oriented economic opportunities. Our choice was based on a presumption that curricular offerings are sensitive to parent and student demands coupled with the proposition that local demand for vocational offerings is more sensitive to local economic and regional characteristics than is the analogous demand for academic offerings.

Students and parents seeking vocational courses will be relatively knowledgeable about local labor market conditions; such knowledge is likely to influence the kind of vocational courses that are sought. Thus we expect to find more agriculture courses in regions where agriculture is important and more distributive education courses in regions where retail sales is an important local economic activity.

We are not claiming that an emphasis on vocational offerings reflects a sole interest in local economic matters. Certainly some vocational offerings have broad applicability and are not place bound. Keyboarding skills are a good example of such globally relevant skills. Moreover, the contents of the

vocational curriculum are only partly influenced by local parent and student demands. State- and regional-level advisory boards can also play important roles in developing the vocational curriculum. What we are claiming is that schools that have unusually rich vocational offerings are revealing a greater sensitivity to and orientation toward local rather than global economic concerns. We relied upon a square root transformation of both ADVCRS and VOCED to reduce skewness.

We measured three related aspects of migration. The first two variables constitute two of the most common routes out of one's home community: attending a four-year college and joining the military. We constructed a measure of each of these from the 1982, 1984, and 1986 senior follow-up surveys. Our variables are aggregated to the school level and measure the percentage of a school's seniors who reported that they were in a four-year college or university at any time during the six years of the follow-up period (PCTCOLL). We constructed a similar measure of the percentage reporting that they spent time in the service (PCTMIL).

Finally, we constructed a school-level measure of migration (PCTLEFT). This variable is the percentage of a school's seniors who reported living more than 50 miles from their high school community in 1986, six years after the base year survey.

Our analysis begins with an examination of the bivariate relationship between the rural identity of a high school and the incidence of out-migration. The fact that this relationship is substantial and statistically significant sets the stage for our subsequent analyses of the roles played by school and community characteristics. This inquiry into the nature of the migration process begins with an assessment of relationships between the five structural characteristics and the kinds of courses found in the high school curricula. Specifically, we regressed our two measures of curricular offerings on the five structural characteristics: (a) average parental socioeconomic status, (b) average student academic ability, (c) location in a rural area, (d) school size, and (e) location in an isolated area.

We next considered the roles played by the structural characteristics as well as curricular offerings on both the decision

Table 3.1 Mean Percentage Migrating by School Location (N = 570)

	Urban	*Suburban*	*Rural*
Mean PCT LEFT	23.9	32.0	41.3
SD	16.6	18.3	19.8
Weighted N	40	177	353

NOTE: df = 2, 567; p < .001.

to go to college and the decision to enter the military. Regression analyses permit an assessment of the effects of curricular offerings, holding constant the five structural characteristics.

Finally, our attention turns to the measure of migration. We regress this variable successively on the five structural characteristics, the curriculum variables, and finally the variables measuring participation in either college or the military.

The analysis concludes with a reestimation of the college going, military going, and migration models, looking separately at the urban, suburban, and rural strata of the sample.

Findings

Table 3.1 demonstrates the very substantial and statistically significant variation between rural, suburban, and urban schools in the percentage of their seniors who migrate within six years of their schooling experience. According to Table 3.1, in the average urban high school, 23.9% of the seniors had migrated to a community more than 50 miles distant within six years; the comparable figure for rural high schools was 41.3%. The figure for suburban schools was 32.0%.

Table 3.2 provides the zero-order correlation matrix as well as the means and standard deviations for all of the selected variables, with listwise delation of missing data in effect. There are several points of interest. First, the number of advanced academic courses found within a school is substantially conditioned by the structural variables. Isolation and

Table 3.2 Correlation Matrix (N = 494)

	SIZE	AVTEST	RURAL	ISOLATE	AVSES	VOCED	ADVCRS	PCTMIL	PCTCOLL	PCTLEFT
SIZE	1.000									
AVTEST	.146	1.000								
RURAL	-.537	-.207	1.000							
ISOLATE	-.598	-.068	.564	1.000						
AVSES	.312	.782	-.331	-.219	1.000					
VOCED	.644	.183	-.373	-.425	.257	1.000				
ADVCRS	.713	.345	-.499	-.532	.464	.586	1.000			
PCTMIL	.070	-.069	.080	.011	-.099	.086	.066	1.000		
PCTCOLL	.079	.514	-.185	-.076	.474	.043	.204	-.212	1.000	
PCTLEFT	-.267	.332	.299	.435	.150	-.226	-.183	.077	.196	1.000
Mean	24.07	48.97	.63	5.14	-.196	5.93	1.38	7.20	33.04	37.60
SD	11.11	3.52	.49	2.16	.323	2.04	1.18	8.26	17.04	20.56

ruralness have strong negative effects, while the average ability level, SES, and especially size have strong positive effects. The structural variables have significant but smaller effects on a school's vocational offerings.

Second, the correlations among the background variables are of interest. As we would expect, school size, ruralness, and isolation are strongly related. The significance of this fact is that it will be difficult to ascertain which of these factors has the most powerful effect on any of our dependent variables in subsequent regression analyses. It is also worth noting that, on average, rural schools serve distinctly less advantaged clienteles than do their urban and suburban counterparts and that, perhaps partly as a consequence, the average ability test scores of their students is also lower.

Third, the percentage of a high school's seniors who serve in the military is virtually unaffected by any of the factors considered. This is not true for the percentage of seniors who attend college. Both a school's average ability and its average SES have the expected substantial positive influence, while being in a rural area has a small but significant negative effect

on college going. Of more interest to us here is the small but significant effect of the curriculum on college going: The number of advanced academic courses a school offers is correlated .204 with the percentage of seniors attending a four-year college or university. Vocational offerings have no effect on college going.

Fourth, the zero-order correlation matrix suggests that the percentage of seniors migrating (PCTLEFT) is significantly related to all of the factors we are considering, though the relation with military service is tiny. (This may suggest that many who serve in the military return to their home communities after that service.) Note particularly that migration seems to be decreased when schools offer a strong vocational education program ($r = -.226$). This fits with our earlier speculation that such programs are attentive to local labor market conditions. The zero-order correlation of the number of advanced courses a school offers with the percentage of its graduates who migrate, however, is opposite to our expectations. The correlation of $-.183$ suggests that, the more academic courses a school offers, the less likely are its graduates to leave home. We shall return to this point later.

Turning now to the question of influences on curricular offerings, Table 3.3 reports the results of regressing the number of different advanced academic courses and vocational courses a school offers on the five structural variables. All variables except a school's ruralness contribute independently to the number of different advanced academic courses it offers. In contrast, only school size and the average level of its students' ability contribute to the extensiveness of vocational offerings. It is worth noting that the latter effect is positive; that is, the higher the average ability level of the student body, the greater the number of vocational courses offered. While this effect is not large, it is opposite to what some might predict. It suggests that schools serving relatively low-achieving students, who, presumably, are less likely to attend college, are also less likely to offer their students an extensive vocational curriculum designed to prepare them for work after high school.

Table 3.3 The Effect of Schools' Features on Course Offerings (Standardized Regression Coefficients; N = 494)

	Course Offerings	
	ADVCRS	*VOCED*
SIZE	.543***	.597***
AVTEST	.134***	.120***
RURAL	-.059	-.003
ISOLATE	-.139***	-.067
AVSES	-.142***	-.039
Adjusted R^2	.592***	.420***

NOTE: *p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .01.

A simple comparison of the standardized regression weights in Table 3.3 suggests that school size is the most important predictor of both advanced academic and vocational course offerings. This result has policy significance, because for years it has been common to assume that school size is a critical determinant of curriculum richness.

Our results also indicate, however, that other factors are related to course offerings, even among like-sized schools (also see Monk & Haller, 1991). Moreover, it is at least conceivable that the relatively large beta weights revealed in Table 3.3 for size are upwardly biased because of collinearity with the remaining structural factors. For example, the zero-order correlation between size and isolation is -.60, between size and advanced courses .71, and between isolation and advanced courses -.53.

To get a second estimate of the independent contribution of each of these variables, we partitioned the total variance explained (59.2%) for advanced academic offerings into those parts uniquely associated with each of the five structural factors. School size uniquely explains 16% of this total, isolation only 1%, and the remaining factors even less than 1%. This suggests two things: First, size has a substantial effect on course offerings independent of other structural features of schools, but, second, most of the variation is shared among

Table 3.4 The Effect of Schools' Structural Features and Course Offerings on College Going and Military Service (Standardized Regression Coefficients; N = 494)

	PCTCOLL		*PCTMIL*	
SIZE	-.087*	-.046	.193***	.086
AVTEST	.364***	.372***	.047	.022
RURAL	-.088*	-.086*	.132**	.139**
ISOLATE	-.014	-.016	.023	.046
AVSES	.184***	.175***	-.148*	-.164*
ADVCRS		.034		.130*
VOCED		-.099*		.064
Adjusted R^2	.277***	.280**	.026***	.033***
Adjusted R^2 Increase		.003**		.007*

NOTE: *p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .01

the various combinations of these features. In short, while school size seems to be a critical determinant of the magnitude of a school's curricular offerings, its actual importance cannot be definitively determined with these data. Similar conclusions using different types of analyses were reached in our earlier work (Haller et al., 1990; Monk, 1987; Monk & Haller, 1991).

In Table 3.4 we turn our attention to the two important means by which young people migrate from their home communities: entrance into college and entrance into the military. When we regress the percentage of a high school's seniors who spend some time in a four-year college or university on the structural variables, we see that the average ability level of a school and its average SES level have substantial and statistically significant effects, both positive. Slight relationships are revealed for both school size and ruralness, suggesting that there is some tendency for students from small rural schools to be less likely to go to college, although the standard errors are too large to satisfy a 5% level of statistical significance. Isolation has no discernible effect on college going. The modest strength of the relationships for school size and

ruralness are intriguing given the common beliefs that young people from rural small schools tend to have lower aspirations than others. Indeed, there is some evidence that this belief is correct (McIntyre & Marion, 1989; Monk & Haller, 1986). Our finding suggests that the aspiration-college going link may be largely explained by an association of average ability levels and SES with aspirations. As we have seen, rural schools tend to be slightly lower on our measures of both ability and SES.

We can also see from Table 3.4 that, when course offering variables are entered, the positive bivariate relationship observed earlier between the number of advanced courses and college going disappears. Numerous vocational course offerings appear to have a slight depressing influence on college going, but this relationship falls short of a 5% level of statistical significance. Together, the number of advanced courses and the number of vocational courses add less than 1% to the explained variance in college going.

The right-hand panel of Table 3.4 deals with the incidence of military service and shows that none of the variables we have been considering has much explanatory power. At best, we explain only 3.3 of the variance in the incidence of military service, although it appears that rural schools contribute slightly more students to the services and higher-SES schools slightly less.

Finally, we regressed the percentage of each school's senior class who had migrated on all the variables in our model, entered successively. Table 3.5 shows that ruralness, higher average student ability levels, and higher levels of isolation are all associated with a greater incidence of migration. These results continue to appear even as additional variables are added to the model.

Table 3.5 also shows that, controlling for all structural factors, students from schools with more extensive vocational offerings have a greater tendency to remain within 50 miles of where they went to high school. Recall our assertion that an emphasis on vocational offerings reflects a more local or regional orientation on the part of the school and the larger

Table 3.5 The Effect of Schools' Structural Features, Course Offerings, and Migration Routes on Migration (Standardized Regression Coefficient; N = 494)

	PCTLEFT		
	1	*2*	*3*
SIZE	-.015	.077	.072
AVTEST	.436***	.455***	.417***
RURAL	.166***	.163***	.156***
ISOLATE	.350***	.336***	.332***
AVSES	-.055	-.053	-.052
ADVCRS		-.043	-.061
VOCED		-.117**	-.114**
PCTCOLL			.114***
PCTMIL			.114***
Adjusted R^2	.336***	.342***	.356***
Adjusted R^2 Increase		.006**	.014**

NOTE: *p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .01.

community. It is worth emphasizing that this curricular effect on migration remains even with controls in place for the more conventional influences on migrations (e.g., ability, SES, and ruralness). The increase in R^2 when course offerings are added to the equation (.006), however, can only be termed splendidly trivial. Thus, while the effect of vocational offerings is statistically significant, it is not clear that it has any practical significance. Note also that the unexpected negative zero-order correlation of ADVCRS with PCTLEFT (-.183) disappears when structural factors are controlled, suggesting that the apparent depressing effect of advanced academic courses on students' tendency to migrate was largely spurious.

The expected positive relationships between the incidence of students with college or military service and the incidence of out-migration is also revealed by Table 3.5. The tiny negative direct effect of a vocational emphasis within the curriculum on the percentage leaving remains despite the inclusion of the percentage going to college, which we learned in Table 3.4

Table 3.6 Effects of Schools' Curricular Offerings on Migratory Behavior by Strata[a] (Standardized Regression Coefficients)

	Urban	*Suburban*	*Rural*
Percentage entering college:			
ADVCRS	.062	-.081	.112
VOCED	-.053	.071	-.211***
Percentage entering the military:			
ADVCRS	.064	-.119	.278***
VOCED	-.093	.004	-.088
Percentage leaving after 6 years:			
ADVCRS	-.277	-.090	.027
VOCED	.008	-.150	-.119*
N	35	150	309

NOTE: *p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .01.
a. Controlling for four structural variables: school size, average test scores, school isolation, and average SES.

has a slight negative relationship to vocational offerings. Thus an emphasis on vocational courses has a small direct as well as a small indirect effect, via the incidence of students going to college, on out-migration.

Table 3.6 presents our final analyses in which we look separately at the curricular effects on college going, entrance into the military, and migration for the urban, suburban, and rural strata of our sample. Recall that we had reason to suppose that curricular effects would be more pronounced in rural schools. The results in Table 3.6 provide limited support for this proposition. According to Table 3.6, all of the relationships we found between curricular offerings and the incidence of college going, entrance into the military, and migration out of the hometown arise from within the rural stratum of the sample. There appears to be no relationship between curricular offerings, as they were measured here, and migration behaviors within the urban and suburban strata.

Moreover, the signs of the relationships revealed are consistent with what the rural critics of curricular reform would expect. An emphasis on vocational offerings within rural high schools has a negative effect on college going, while an emphasis on advanced academic courses within rural schools has a positive effect on exiting via the military. Lest we be too impressed with this confirmation of the critic's proposition, it is worth noting that in all cases the magnitudes of these relationships are quite small, and contrary to what the critics would predict, advanced academic offerings are not more positively related to college going within rural areas.

Discussion

Our results make it clear that curricular offerings, as we have measured them, have little to do with decisions young people make about leaving their home communities. Our results also make it clear that school size has neither a direct nor an indirect impact on migration. Once size has had its substantial effect on course offerings, it has only a minor impact on college going, on entrance into the military, and ultimately on migration itself.

It thus appears that the two most mutable schooling characteristics that we examined, curricular offerings and school size, have only a minor impact on the out-migration of youth. In contrast, relatively immutable structural aspects of schools and communities (e.g., isolation, intellectual levels, and to a lesser degree ruralness) coupled with the individual traits of students appear to be the primary determinants of youngsters' tendencies to leave home.

These findings are relevant to the policy issues we raised at the beginning of our chapter. At least insofar as "improving the curriculum" means expanding either the academic or the vocational range of courses offered, there seems to be little merit in the notion that the migration from rural communities can be stemmed by such curricular reform. This is not an argument for a policy of benign neglect or for school consolidation; it is merely one to recognize the limitations of schools as useful tools in this area of public policy.

Our results also speak to the critics' assertions about the need to develop programs specifically targeted to rural needs and to reverse the "citification" of the curriculum. Whatever else "citification" means, it surely means a curriculum oriented to advanced academics, subjects that are of special use in complex, professional, and technical occupations—that is, those found in urban centers. But our results suggest that providing opportunities to develop these skills to youth in rural areas seems not to promote their subsequent migration. We also found that providing more locally oriented programs (i.e., vocational education courses) has only negligible deterrent effects on migration. It is clear that rural youth will migrate regardless of the range of curricular offerings. Arguably then, not providing "urban skills" risks letting young people leave for the city unprepared to play productive roles.

This lack of effect is also important beyond what it says about the critics' calls for more rurally oriented curricula in rural schools. It suggests that small and rural schools can comply, to the extent that they are able, with national and state pressures to strengthen their academic curriculum without running the danger of exacerbating the drain of talented young people. Adding calculus and advanced placement physics courses is not a means of hastening the demise of rural communities.

Thus it appears that decision makers in rural areas have no rational basis for a concern over what curricular offerings can mean for migration. But we need to be mindful of the broader context in which these local decision makers operate. Rural communities are losing substantial portions of their young people, and it seems safe to assume that local officials such as school board members are fearful of these losses and are alarmed. While an "urban-oriented" curriculum may not be a strong predictor of migration, it is a logical one, and it may loom large in these local decision makers' thinking. Moreover, we did find evidence of a modest negative relationship between vocational offerings and migration. Thus, given a reasonable concern over the loss of youth and the absence of alternative means of intervening, it would not be surprising if some rural school boards

looked to augmented vocational programs (and perhaps weakened academic ones) to help stem that loss.

Finally, we need to keep in mind the limits to our study. While our premise was that mutable schooling practices could have bearing on migration, the only readily changeable schooling phenomena we measured were school size and course title offerings. These are poor measures for what may be truly important: the contents of courses, the degree to which a school actually broadens the intellectual horizons of its students, and so forth.

Nevertheless, our results ought to be sobering to any reformer convinced that the simple manipulation of schooling attributes can have far-reaching implications for external social phenomena such as migration. While there may be many excellent and compelling reasons for reforming curricular offerings or changing average school size, our results make it clear that such reasons ought not to include expected changes in the migration behaviors of youth.

Note

1. These administrators' assessments correlated at high levels with alternative indicators of ruralness. For example, the point biserial correlation of the administrator's assessment with the 1980 county population in which the school was located was -.72.

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